DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 733 UD 029 641

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TITLE Urban Elementary School Teachers' Opinion of School Choice and Voucher Plans.
PUB DATE [92]
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Accountability; Educational Change; Educational Finance; *Educational Vouchers; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; *Equal Education; Free Choice Transfer Programs; Government Role; Literature Reviews; Parochial Schools; Private Schools; Public Schools; *School Choice; School Restructuring; Teacher Attitudes; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS Chicago Public Schools IL

ABSTRACT

The opinions of educators who would be affected by school-choice and voucher plans were studied in a survey of 144 teachers (84 percent female) from 6 elementary public schools in Chicago (Illinois). Survey questions were derived from an extensive review of the literature. Seventy-seven percent of teachers agreed with interdistrict choice, but only 41 percent agreed with statewide choice. Fifty-one percent thought that parents should not be able to choose from any school within the state. Sixty-five percent of these teachers thought that vouchers would not be a more equitable way of funding schools than the present equalization formulas. Teachers tended to think that some schools would receive large numbers of students and consequently more money, while others would receive few students and very little money. Forty-eight percent did not feel that vouchers would make schools more directly accountable to parents, and they did not think that vouchers would help improve schools. The majority also felt that using government funds for religious schools through vouchers is unconstitutional. One table presents a summary of survey findings. (Contains 14 references.) (SLD)

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URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINION OF SCHOOL CHOICE AND VOUCHER PLANS

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Over the years there have been continuous efforts made to improve education (Raywid, 1983). These efforts have resulted in more spending, obtaining of more and various types of equipment, new teaching methods as well as a host of other endeavors (Kirst and Wirt, 1989). Yet according to many education reports, students are still not performing academically as they should be (Kirst and Wirt, 1989).

Many educators feel that the solution to most problems in education can be solved through the use of school choice and voucher plans (Education Policy Paper, 1989). This has proven to be a very controversial issue (Stedman, 1992).

It is the intent of this study to look at the opinion of educators who would be affected by choice and voucher plans thereby making a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. Not only would this study add to the current knowledge on the topic but it would also help to clear up the confusion of several educators concerning urban elementary school teachers' attitudes toward choice and voucher plans. It is also hoped that the findings will be of value to administrators, teacher-educators as well as parents as they contemplate the value of choice and voucher plans.

School choice and voucher plans are not new concepts in American education. In the 1950's, economist Milton Friedman composed a voucher plan to be used in school choice (Catterall, 1984). Under Friedman's plan, a uniform voucher would be given directly to the parents of elementary and secondary school children (Catterall, 1984). The parents would then be allowed to choose a school, public or private, within the district for their children to attend (Catterall, 1984). The school chosen by the parents would have to be a participant in the program and comply with whatever regulations were placed upon it (Kirkpatrick, 1990). Under the Friedman plan, participating schools had few regulations to worry about. His plan contained no restrictions on the schools philosophy, religious purpose, or overall ideology

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(Catterall, 1984). Standards for the school as well as teacher certification requirements were to be left to the schools (Catterall, 1984).

Friedman also felt that if parents chose a school whose tuition exceeded the amount specified in the voucher, parents could add on the difference (Catterall, 1984). Any transportation or information services in the school of choice under the Friedman plan would not be provided for in the voucher (Catterall, 1984).

In the late 1960's, sociologist Christopher Jenks developed an experimental plan (Catterall, 1984). His goal with the plan was to test the effects of a voucher system (Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Under the Jenks plan, the actual value of the voucher was to be determined by the costs of schooling in a district rather than a set amount across the districts. This was because Jenks placed a strong emphasis on compensatory education (Catterall, 1984). Like the Friedman plan, Jenks plan would give vouchers directly to parents for use in a school of their choosing (Catterall, 1984). The Jenks plan contained several regulations. Private schools, for example, had to comply with existing state and local regulations. Certain philosophies or political beliefs might disqualify a school from participation in the plan (Catterall, 1984). Participating schools would not be allowed to charge fees which exceeded the value of the voucher, nor would private contributions to schools be allowed. Transportation services would be provided if needed under the Jenks plan (Catterall, 1984).

In the late 1970's, John Coons and Stephen Sugerman, both lawyers specializing in school finance reform, proposed a constitutional initiative for education vouchers in California (Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Under this plan, vouchers would be provided according to the existing state per pupil expenditure plan minus 10% (Catterall, 1984). Parental add ons were banned under this plan but gifts and contributions to schools by parents were allowed (Catterall, 1984).

Eligibility under the Coons/Sugerman plan required that private schools meet the state laws currently governing education (Catterall, 1984).

Several ideas underlie the basic voucher concept. Most of these ideas were incorporated in some form in the preceding three examples.

First, unlike the present system of school funding which appropriates money from federal, state and local governments directly to school districts, voucher plans begin by funding the pupil directly (Catterall, 1984).

A second idea is that voucher plans automatically assume the availability of choices among many schools (Catterall, 1984). Parents and children can select a school that fits their particular wants or needs (Elmore, 1986), and use the voucher to pay for that education. There are already several choice programs in public education. Magnet schools, alternative schools, arts

schools, and Science/Mathematics academies are but a few examples of these choices (Riddle and Stedman, 1989; Raywid, 1983). The argument against these choices is that they are limited to only certain students (Doyle and Finn, 1983), hence the need for vouchers which can be used by any students.

A third idea is that of regulatory provisions in voucher plans. Vouchers can be designed for elementary and secondary schools or they can be confined to certain grade levels (Catterall, 1984). They can also be designed for certain types of services such as remedial education (Catterall, 1984). Vouchers can be designed for certain types of schools, public or private (Catterall, 1984). Vouchers can require certain types of curriculum. They can include specific personnel standards, or admission and dismissal procedures (Catterall, 1984).

Vouchers can also build in supplementary services such as information and transportation provisions (Doyle and Finn, 1983).

School choice as defined in the literature, is the ability of parents and/or students to select the elementary or secondary schools in which they wish to enroll. This choice can be between different public schools or between public and private schools (Stedman, 1992).

A voucher plan as defined in the literature, is the issuing of funds from the government directly to parents or students in the form of vouchers. (Type of payment--promissory notes.) The parents or students would then select their school and use the voucher as tuition payment. The school would turn the voucher over to the government in order to receive payment (Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Sponsors of education vouchers have several reasons for favoring the program. First is their belief in school choice and the feeling that real choice is lacking in the public school system (Stedman and Riddle, 1989). Most poor and minority students are not able to attend many of the magnet or alternative schools (Stedman and Riddle, 1989). According to Uzzell (1989), a voucher plan will give all children equal opportunity to attend a school of their choice.

Next voucher advocates see vouchers as a safeguard against the woes of monopoly (Catterall, 1984). Public schools as they now exist have a virtual monopoly on student enrollment. Because of this, many problems and complaints go unheeded. Administrative and teacher mistakes go unchecked (Catterall, 1984).

Vouchers, it is felt, would cause schools to respond to any problems, mistakes, or complaints or they would stand to lose students (Catterall, 1984).

This leads to the next reason for supporting vouchers, the virtues of competition (Catterall, 1989). The proponents of vouchers claim that the use of vouchers would introduce competition among schools. Such competition would cause the ineffective schools to shape up or close down (Cooley, 1991). Vouchers are also seen by many as a simpler way to fund schools. Vouchers are also said to be a fairer method of school funding (Catterall, 1984). The feeling is that poor and minority students will have

greater opportunities to attend better schools then they now have (Doyle and Finn, 1983). This, according to Doyle and Finn (1984), will result in more quality education for poor and minority students. Parents who are able to choose their schools will be apt to become more involved in the schools and in their children's education (Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Finally, proponents of vouchers feel that school choice through the use of vouchers will enhance teacher effectiveness (Elmore, 1986). According to Riddle and Stedman (1989), the belief is that school choice creates the kind of environment that promotes teacher satisfaction.

Elmore (1986) indicates that teachers assigned to schools from central offices rather than being selected by individual schools makes for a bad situation. He states:

> "Organizations that receive their clients and staff from centralized assignment systems and have the nature of their work determined by rules set elsewhere are more likely to be responsive to central administrators and rulemakers than to clients." (p. 25)

There have been several reasons put forth in opposition to voucher plans in school choice. One reason is that voucher plans contain too many uncertainties. The details of implementation according to opponents have never fully been articulated (Catterall, 1984). A big fear among those in opposition to vouchers are the potential abuses that may occur. Catterall (1984) says:

> "In a system where schools operate individually and private entrepreneurs are encouraged, the potential for abuse is very great. Will profiteers skimp on education and make themselves rich? Would schools misrepresent their programs and qualifications? Would required curricula be maintained? Would schools illegally discriminate or otherwise violate individual rights? What size administrative system would be needed to curb abuses? Would freedom of exit for pupils and their families tend to control abuses, or would hucksters in search of fast dollars repeatedly wreck havoc with children's lives and the public's money?" (p. 29)

Cooley (1991) calls this potential for abuse the hidden agenda. By this, he means schools may not be interested in the child's education but rather their own interests.

Two other criticisms are Social Stratification and Advantages to the Elite. Stedman (1992) indicates that choice would promote racial, ethnic and social segregation in our schools, something we have worked very hard to avoid over the past 20 years or so.

Opponents of choice and voucher plans also indicate that elite or well to do parents will benefit more because they have access to information about schools (Riddle and Stedman, 1989).

A final argument against vouchers comes from private schools. They fear that with private schools using public funds in the form of vouchers, government control will become greater (Kirst and Wirt, 1989). Others wonder if funding private religious schools is constitutional. Stedman (1992) states:

> "Constitutionally, can private, sectarian schools be involved in publicly funded choice programs? Concern about the constitutionality of such a program arises because most private school students are enrolled in sectarian schools. Thus at issue is whether this form of public aid violates the First Amendment to the Constitution which proscribes governmental action to establish religion or to prohibit the free exercise of religion." (p. 16)

Several studies have been conducted pertaining to school choice and voucher plans. Raywid (1983) concluded that being able to choose between alternative schools was beneficial to helping solve various social problems.

In a study by Riddle and Stedman (1989), several choice programs are reviewed and analyzed. Several pro's and con's pertaining to school choice are also discussed. The authors conclude that choice is certainly an important phase of school reform and should be continued. They feel that ways to improve choice should continue to be investigated.

In another article written by Stedman (1992), he gives an overview of the 102nd Congressional debate on the issue of elementary and secondary school choice. Stedman concludes that most government officials seem to favor some type of choice program. Stedman states:

> "Interest in choice is high. Over half of the States have implemented one or more choice programs. Legislative initiatives are under consideration by the 102nd Congress that would provide Federal financial support to school choice programs. The House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee have reported bills (H.R. 3320, S.2) that could, to varying degrees, permit Federal funds to be used for school choice programs. The President's America 2000 education reform strategy strongly endorses school choice, including all private schools, as a necessary element for revitalizing U.S. schools." (p. 6)

This appears to be a big plus for school choice advocates.

In the Education Policy Paper: Number 2 (1989), the authors discuss several things. They begin by looking at the present state of American Education. Their conclusion is that U.S. education is in poor shape. They state it this way:

> "The consensus is clear: America's public schools are still in serious trouble. Since the publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983, educational reform has become one of this country's most powerful and controversial political issues. But the numbers remain appalling. Grades, test scores, dropout rates all suggest that the educational reform movement is failing." (p. 6)

Since education is in poor shape according to the authors of the Education Policy Paper Report, and reforms are not working, something new is needed. That something, according to the authors, is school choice. They go on to propose their rationale for educational choice. In doing so, two proponents of school choice are cited. John Chubb states:

> "The second most important influence on student achievement is the school itself. In fact, the influence of the school itself, measured comprehensively, was about as important as the influence of the wealth and education and occupational status of the family--and more important than the influence of peers." (p.14)

According to Chubb, since schools have such a major influence on student achievement, why not concentrate reform at the school level--via choice.

The second proponent of school choice cited in this study is James Coleman. Coleman discusses the results of a study of high school sophomores and seniors matriculating in private and public schools. His findings indicate that by using a system of choice and following the Catholic school model, public schools can be improved. Choice, according to Coleman, helps to bring the school and community together in a close working relationship.

The authors of the report then go on to look at models of educational choice in practice. The first is the Minnesota choice program. Three basic rationales are cited as the reasoning for choice in Minnesota. They quote these rationales as stated by Joe Nathan:

> "First there is no one best school for all students or all teachers . . . . Second; expansion of choice among public schools is part of a broad historical movement that has already expanded opportunities in voting rights, employment opportunities and so on. Having more opportunities for families to choose among schools, especially public schools, is part of a broad, progressive movement which has been going on in this country for two hundred years . . . . Third; controlled competition can help stimulate improvement. Not unlimited competition. Not total laissez-faire competition. Controlled competition." (p. 24)

In other words, Nathan and the authors feel that the present system of assigning students to schools is harmful to many students because the school may not have what the student needs. Choice can solve this problem. Educational choice is also seen as another important movement in a host of movements for equality and better opportunities. They also feel that competition among schools is a sure way to help improve them.

The authors then look at choice in East Harlem, New York. Here, a free choice program has been instituted at the junior high school level. The major idea behind this program is school ownership. The authors state:

> "Choice gives youngsters, teachers and parents a sense that they own the school because they selected the school, because the school attempts to meet their interests and abilities. The concept of ownership is a good capitalist idea. People seem to treat what they own much better than what someone else owns. If every youngster in the school feels that this is my school, this is my place, you see very little graffiti, you see very little vandalism, you see the students protecting that school." (p. 31)

Doyle and Finn (1984) in a study conclude that statewide voucher plans provide true educational choice. They state:

> "A further virtue is the provision of true educational choice for all youngsters, regardless of their families' financial circumstances, race, or heritage. In fact, a statewide voucher plan would entirely--eliminate the most vexing barriers to racial and socioeconomic integration of the public schools, namely the geographic boundaries of today's local school systems." (p. 94)

Doyle and Finn both seem to feel that local choice is not good enough because localities are already segregated. Choice in that type of setting would not solve many of the problems that certain students face.

Uzzell, in his study (1984), looks at the Reagan administration's voucher proposal. The proponents of the Equal Educational Opportunity Act, as it was called, felt that the present system of Federal funding under Chapter 1 was inadequate. An example of this inadequacy cited by Uzzell indicates that students with special needs under the existing Chapter 1 program are in essence helped very little. He states:

> "In a typical Chapter One school, disadvantaged children spend most of the school day in the same classroom with the same teacher as their non-disadvantaged peers. But for part of the day--perhaps an hour--they are

> pulled out of the regular classroom to receive separate instruction in a separate classroom from a separate teacher or teacher-aide. Usually, their regular class continues in session at the same time. After the children return from this Chapter One session, their regular teacher may or may not be willing and able to help them catch up with whatever material they missed. By its very nature, Chapter One thus tends to aggravate the problems of cohesion and control which plaque today's impersonal, bureaucratized public schools." (p. 19)

The proposed Equal Educational Opportunity Act seeks to solve that problem by allowing vouchers to be used so parents can place children in schools that will give them a full day of the help they need. The plan is designed to be used in both public and private schools.

Cooley, in his study of school choice and vouchers in Pennsylvania (1991), indicates that vouchers will not only drain schools of good students, but also of excellent teachers. This would leave certain schools in desperate shape. Particularly schools used by the poor and minority students. They would be left with inadequate schools and most importantly inadequate teachers.

Elmore cites in his study (1986) the Alum Rock voucher experiment. The experiment proved to be unsuccessful for several reasons but an extremely important reason was the lack of support by administrators and teachers. According to Elmore:

> "Teachers and administrators tend to adopt client choice systems to ease their effects on established patterns, rather than adapting their behavior to the new incentives introduced by client choice . . .alternative programs tend to lose their distinctiveness and their support among teachers and clients over time." (p. 41-42)

This seems to show that many teachers are really not interested in voucher plans. This is particularly so as time goes on.

Catterall (1984) indicates that teachers, as a whole, are not supportive of voucher plans in school choice. He states:

> "Teachers were the only outspoken labor group during negotiations for voucher experiments, and they were almost universally opposed to the idea . . . .American Federation of Teachers President, Albert Shanker was a steady opponent, decrying the notion of experimenting with children on a large scale by instituting irreversible changes in urban school districts for the sake of research. Even in Alum Rock and the other districts where serious consideration was given to experiments, teachers were not active allies of the experiments--

> they simply did not oppose their efforts. The organized response to the voucher experiment was almost universally negative. Those groups with established economic interests in the school system--teacher and administrator--were not willing to risk their positions for the purpose of an experiment." (p. 36)

According to the literature looked at, a great deal of effort has been put into the development of voucher plans in school choice. Many types of choice programs have been developed.

Under choice, parents have several options to choose from. With the use of vouchers, proponents feel that choice can be extended in a big way. Parents may be able to choose between public schools and/or private schools. They may seek out schools that will fit their children's particular needs. Also, according to the plan, teachers would be able to fit into a school that is conducive to their styles. Vouchers, it was felt, would be strongly supported by teachers. Yet according to the literature, that is not the case among teachers. Teachers don't appear, as a group, to support the use of vouchers in school choice. Their feeling toward vouchers in school choice seems to be one of fear. Fear that their positions will be at risk. Fear that they may end up stuck in an undesirable situation, and fear of too much parental control.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine what the opinion of urban elementary school teachers is towards school choice and voucher plans.

General Questions of the Study

1. Are teachers in favor of the use of school choice within a school district and/or the right to choose attendance at any school within the state?

2. Will teachers view voucher plans as a viable alternative to present school funding?

3. Do teachers feel that vouchers used in school choice will help to make schools more concerned about student needs?

4. Do teachers feel that vouchers will help to improve schools?

5. Do teachers feel that vouchers used in school choice will create more problems than they solve?

6. Do teachers feel it is unconstitutional for the state government to fund private sectarian schools?

7. Do teachers feel that vouchers will lead to government control of private schools?

Population

The population in this study consists of seventeen thousand four hundred ninety-seven elementary teachers from the Chicago Public School System. The teachers are composed of eighty-seven percent females and thirteen percent males. Most of the teachers in the public elementary schools of Chicago possess between fifteen and twenty years of teaching experience.

One hundred forty-four teachers from six public elementary schools in different sections of the city were given the choice/voucher survey.

Procedures

The survey of teachers' opinions on school choice and voucher plans was used to measure urban elementary public school teachers' opinions toward choice and voucher systems. The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of teachers from the public school system of Chicago. Chicago has seventeen thousand four hundred ninety-seven public elementary teachers. Fifteen thousand two hundred fifty-three of these teachers are female (87%), and two thousand two hundred forty-four are male (13%). The average teaching experience of the population is between fifteen and twenty years.

The survey was given to a sample of one hundred forty-four teachers from six schools in the city. The teachers in this sample consisted of one hundred twenty-one females (84%) and twenty-three males (16%). The average years of teaching experience among the sample population was seventeen and six-tenth years (17.6). All one hundred forty-four of the teachers returned the surveys. All of the returned surveys were usable.

The results of the survey were then tabulated. The percentages of agree, disagree and no opinion were analyzed to determine the opinions of the teachers towards choice/voucher plans. The Chi Square was used to determine the statistical significance (.05) of the responses.

Findings

The data in Table one show that the majority of the teachers have a favorable opinion of interdistrict choice yet an unfavorable opinion of the use of vouchers in choice.

In the section of the survey that dealt with question one of the general questions of the study, there were two statements. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers agree with interdistrict choice, while only forty-one percent agree with statewide choice. Fifty-one percent felt parents should not be able to choose from any school within the state. This coincides with current research which indicates that the majority of teachers do favor

TABLE I
RESPONSES TO CHOICE/VOUCHER SURVEY

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1. Parents should be allowed to choose and send their children to any public school within their School District.	111 77%*	27 19%	6 4%
2. Parents should be allowed to choose and send their children to any public school within the state.	59 41%	74 51%	11 8%
3. Vouchers would be a more equitable way of funding schools than the present equalization formulas.	28 19%	93 65%*	23 16%
4. Vouchers would reduce the bloated and wasteful spending under present school funding.	22 15%	95 66%*	27 19%
5. Vouchers would make administrator and teacher salaries more responsive to market forces.	26 18%	80 56%*	38 26%
6. Vouchers would provide more money to local schools than does present school funding.	14 10%	85 59%*	45 31%
7. Vouchers will make schools directly accountable to parents.	47 33%	70 48%*	27 19%
8. Vouchers will allow parents to have greater control over the education of their children.	62 43%	68 47%	14 10%
9. Vouchers will improve access to better schools, public and private, for low income and minority students.	52 36%	75 52%*	17 12%

		Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
10.	Vouchers will cause teachers to upgrade their skills in order to keep their teaching positions.	34 24%	86 60%*	24 16%
11.	Vouchers will cause schools to specialize in certain areas of student interests.	59 41%	60 42%	25 17%
12.	Vouchers will promote efficiency and diversity in the programs of the school.	47 33%	74 51%*	23 16%
13.	The competition for students that vouchers will supposedly bring about will cause schools to improve their facilities as well as their educational programs.	58 40%	65 45%	21 15%
14.	Vouchers will cause school systems to become dominated by a profit motive rather than promoting real interest in students.	82 57%*	32 22%	30 21%
15.	Vouchers will cause schools to be concerned primarily with cost effectiveness as opposed to content, methods, achievement, and a conducive educational climate and workplace for teachers.	68 47%*	43 30%	33 23%
16.	In their quest to attract voucher holding students, schools would stress standardized scores over empowering the students with knowledge, abilities, and skills.	75 52%*	37 26%	32 22%
17.	Vouchers would cause schools to become more racially and ethnically segregated.	90 63%*	38 26%	16 11%
18.	Vouchers would produce different classes of schools--elite, middle class, and poor	106 74%*	25 17%	13 9%

		Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
19.	Under a voucher system, the public schools would become the dumping ground for pupils private schools are unwilling to accept.	105 73%*	19 13%	20 14%
20.	Vouchers would increase public costs by diverting funds to pay non-public school tuition, staffing, transportation costs, as well as building and facilities maintenance.	105 73%*	9 6%	30 21%
21.	Vouchers would cause many public school teachers to lose their positions.	81 56%*	30 21%	33 23%
22.	Vouchers will violate the Constitution by providing government funds to religious schools.	82 57%*	21 15%	41 28%
23.	Once non-public schools accept state funds in the form of vouchers, they are more likely to be under stringent government regulations, leading to complete governmental control.	90 62%*	33 23%	21 15%
24.	Parochial schools, provided they become a part of the voucher/choice system, would no longer be able to offer religious courses.	48 33%	57 40%	39 27%
25.	A system of vouchers should be instituted throughout the state for use in public schools only.	31 22%	80 55%*	33 23%
26.	A system of vouchers should be instituted throughout the state for use in public, private, or religious schools.	17 12%	95 66%*	32 22%

some type of interdistrict choice but not statewide. The common belief for disfavoring statewide choice is expressed in one teacher's comments on the survey that statewide choice would cause too many hardships for all involved.

Statements three through six on the survey pertain to question two of the general questions of the study. Sixty-five percent of the teachers feel that vouchers will not be a more equitable way of funding schools than the present equalization formulas. Though several teachers indicated that they were not totally knowledgeable of how present equalization formulas work, they do feel that schools within the city are distributed money equally. Their feeling is that vouchers would cause some schools to get large numbers of students therefore more money, while others would get little of both. The research also indicates this to be the belief of many educators. The majority of teachers (66%) felt that vouchers would not reduce wasteful spending. Research indicates that many educators feel that transportation costs as well as promotion of schools costs would be very high. Fifty-six percent of the teachers disagreed with statement five that vouchers would make teacher/administrator salaries more responsive to market forces. It appears that the majority of the sample feel that teachers/administrators' salaries will not be determined by the number of students a school can attract. This goes against what much research indicates. Several educators in the research feel that the higher salaried teachers/administrators will be in schools that are able to attract a large number of voucher holding parents. Most of the teachers (59%) disagreed with the statement that vouchers would provide more money to local schools than present funding. The rationale is that under present funding all schools will get adequate money because the majority of the students living in a school area will attend that school. With vouchers, students will leave, causing schools, particularly in poor areas, to lose money. Many educators, according to the research, agree with this rationale.

Question three of the general questions pertain to statements seven through ten of the survey. Forty-eight percent of the teachers feel that vouchers would not make schools directly accountable to parents, while thirty-three percent feel they will. That forty-eight percent seem to feel that even with vouchers, parents won't have much to say about how schools are operated. This may be due to the common attitude that when it comes to education, the schools know best. Statement eight produced forty-seven percent against and forty-three percent for vouchers allowing parents to have greater control over the education of their children. Those in favor probably agree with educators in the research that feel with control of the money comes control over education, while those not in favor would agree with research findings that school boards and schools are not willing to share control with parents. The majority of teachers (52%) disagreed with the statement that vouchers would improve access to better schools for poor and minority students. The belief seems to be that the better schools will find ways to

weed out undesirable students. A very interesting find was made in statement ten. Sixty percent of the teachers felt vouchers would not cause teachers to upgrade their skills. It seems as though teachers feel that upgrading one's skills is dependent not so much on external forces, but rather one's internal desire to improve.

The fourth general question of the study contained five statements on the survey. Three of the statements--vouchers promoting efficiency and diversity in the school's programs (12), vouchers should be instituted throughout the state for use in public schools only (25), and vouchers should be instituted throughout the state for use in public, private or religious schools (26)--were not looked upon favorably by teachers. They received fifty-one, fifty-five, and sixty-six percent disagreement respectively. Research indicates that a good number of educators feel this way about vouchers. Rather than promoting efficiency, they feel that vouchers will cause graft in the form of fly by night schools opening up simply for profit.

Two of the items under question four of the general questions received a relatively equal amount of agree/disagree opinions. Item eleven--vouchers will cause schools to specialize in certain areas of student's interests, and item thirteen--competition will cause improvements in facilities and programs were the two items. Item eleven received forty-one percent agree and forty-two percent disagree while item thirteen received forty percent agree and forty-five percent disagree. Those in agreement seem to feel that schools would develop special programs of interests and improve facilities to attract the voucher holding parents. This is also the feeling of several educators seen in the research. Those in disagreement seem to feel that the amount of money to be received from vouchers would not be enough to allow this to happen.

The eight items (14-21) under the fifth question of the study found the majority of the teachers in agreement in each case. These items were all pertaining to teachers' opinion as to whether vouchers would create more problems than they solved. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers felt vouchers would promote a profit motive in schools. This coincides with the idea of fly by night schools. Forty-seven percent felt vouchers would cause schools to be concerned about cost effectiveness rather than achievement and educational climate. This would seem to be particularly so with schools that could not draw a large number of students. Fifty-two percent felt vouchers would stress standardized scores rather than learning. According to the research many educators feel this way because high standardized scores will make the school look good and therefore attract voucher holding parents. Sixty-three percent of the teachers felt vouchers would cause greater segregation in the schools. This is one of the biggest arguments against the use of vouchers indicated in the research. Seventy-four percent of the teachers felt vouchers would produce classes of schools (elite, middle, lower class) and seventy-three percent felt vouchers would cause

public schools to become the dumping grounds for undesirable students. These are two of the primary arguments against vouchers indicated in the research.

Another major reason indicated in the research for public schools suffering from vouchers is the diversion of funds from the public schools. Item twenty expressed this thought and seventy-three percent of the teachers agreed with it. Fifty-six percent of the teachers also felt that with vouchers, public school teachers' positions would be jeopardized. From the research, this appeared to be the biggest fear that many teachers had. The majority of teachers seemed to feel that with the loss of students using vouchers in private schools, so will go many public school teaching positions.

Question six of the general questions contained one item (22) on the survey. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers agreed that using government funds in religious schools is a violation of the Constitution. In most of the research, this is an issue that is still debated.

Finally, question seven contained two items (23, 24). Most teachers (62%) felt that vouchers used in private schools would lead to complete government control of those institutions. When it comes to private institutions of any kind, most people don't desire much governmental interference. It appears as though teachers feel the same way regarding private schools. In regards to vouchers causing parochial schools to cease offering religious courses, there was no significant difference in opinion. Thirty-three percent indicated that vouchers would cause religious courses to cease being taught while forty percent felt vouchers would have no effect on the teaching of those courses. According to the research, religious courses could be taught without violation to the Constitution by making sure the voucher payments covered non-religious items or courses. Other educators in the research felt that it would be impossible for the government to keep track of how the vouchers were used and therefore to keep from violating the Constitution, religious courses would have to cease.

In response to the comment section at the end of the survey, a few of the teachers made comments that further indicated their agreement with much of what is found in the current research. The following are some of those comments:

1. Vouchers should not be considered period! I agree with Johnathan Kozol in the article "Separate and Savagely Unequal" by Nick Chiles (Essence, August 1992) in which he stated the following . . . "Be he's (Secretary Alexander) only talking about vouchers of a couple of thousand dollars. That might be part of the tuition at the lowest-level private school. Rich people will use it as a subsidy for the best schools. The only way it would be just is if <u>every child</u> in America got an equal voucher passed for the best private schools in America. The Bush administration is never going to do that."

2. The voucher system is just another tactic to divert the real issue in education today. That is education is not meant for everybody. Only the well-informed, sophisticated parent would benefit. Wards of the state, foster children, children whose parents are dope dealers, alcoholics, low-incidence children and high-risk children will fall through the cracks and wind up in the public school (in the dump) room.

3. Will destroy the public school system.

4. I do not think that a voucher system will solve any of the problems in education today.

5. Vouchers would be the worst thing to happen for public education. Eventually, there would be no public schools available.

6. A voucher system will not work because of the bias, discriminatory makeup of its structure.

7. Parents who do not have the means financially will lose in a voucher system. They are the least who can afford it. The education system would suffer. It would become a system of profit and not one for educating the person socially, physically and spiritually.

8. Although the voucher system sounds good, I really do not think that it will be effective. In the long run, I think more public schools will become jeopardized.

9. I strongly support universal public education and I feel that a voucher system would undermine the present system. While the public school systems have tremendous problems, a voucher system would only compound these problems.

10. States should provide adequate funds so that children can receive the best possible education in the public school system. If parents wish to send their children to private schools, that is their privilege, but vouchers should not be allowed.

In summary, the majority of teachers agree with the research findings. Most do not have a favorable opinion of voucher plans, though they do agree with school choice. They don't as a majority feel that vouchers are a viable alternative to present school funding. The majority of teachers don't feel that vouchers will help make schools more concerned about student needs. The majority don't feel that vouchers will help to improve schools. The majority feel that vouchers will create more problems than they solve. The majority of teachers feel that governmental funding to religious schools using vouchers is unconstitutional, and the majority of teachers feel vouchers will lead to govern-

mental control of private schools.

Since teachers' opinions of vouchers coincide with much of the findings in the research, pressures need to be placed on educators and government officials who are tying to promote the use of vouchers. They should conduct more extensive studies across the country in the area of teachers' opinions towards vouchers. This study should not only be done in public schools, but also in private schools as well. Since vouchers would also effect private schools, teachers' opinions and attitudes here would be of great help in determining whether vouchers should be used. Some very serious questions concerning vouchers need to be answered in the mind of many teachers. These questions can only be answered through further research and through several test cases of voucher use in school districts.

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